

## FREEMASONRY IN GARSTON

Freemasonry has existed in the Garston area since the mid-nineteenth century. There were various meeting places in the area, mainly in hotels and public houses. The first recorded meetings were in 1857 at Wood's Wellington Hotel, Garston. Meetings alternated between the Wellington and the Garston Hotel until 1919 when Garston Co-operative Hall was used.

It is believed that the popularity of Freemasonry in the Garston area was because of the many visitors from ships in the local docks. Freemasonry flourished and in the early part of this century, the members of the Lodge of Harmony, founded in 1796, which then met at the Cooperative Hall, decided to build a new purpose-built hall in Island Road South. The hall was officially opened on 21 May 1924. The Lodge of Harmony still meets at the hall, together with twelve other lodges, three Royal Arch Chapters and several other degrees. When originally built, the hall had only one lodge room, a dining room, lounge, bar facilities and committee rooms. Recently, as a result of increased demand for meeting places outside Liverpool city centre, a room has been converted to provide a second lodge room. This also doubles as a dining room and enables two lodges to meet and dine concurrently. Because of the size of the hall and the limit on the number of people who can enjoy its facilities there is a great sense of community spirit. The Garston Group of lodges, being compact, has a family atmosphere. Members visit each other's lodges and they are usually very well known to each other. They support each other's social and fund raising events for the maintenance and upkeep of the hall and also, of course, for charitable purposes

The Freemasons meeting at Garston are justly proud of their record of raising funds for local and national charities. They are particularly keen on assisting the Marie Curie Hospice in Woolton and regularly hold functions to raise monies for them. The Masonic organisation runs an elderly persons' residential home in Crosby and all lodges in the area contribute towards its running costs.

There are long-established links with Garston Parish Church and there is a plaque in the church which commemorates a march by the members of Garston Lodges from the hall to the church and a ringing of a peal of bells.

The Garston Lodge of Installed Masters occasionally holds a service at the church, followed by a meal at the hall which is usually attended by the Vicar and members of the

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congregation. The Garston Masonic Hall is increasingly becoming included in local life and it is frequently used by the local community.

The Hall is geographically well placed just off Horrocks Avenue and being near to Speke Boulevard and the South Liverpool Parkway interchange in Allerton Road. Access is easy from the city centre by train or bus and all neighbouring areas can be accessed via the M62 motorway, the A5300 expressway and "Route 7". Parking is on street but the Hall Directors have engaged a car watcher who is available to any Lodge for meetings and social events, for a small fee. Parking is also available at the South Liverpool Parkway which is only about five hundred yards from the hall.

Recently the main dining room has been refurbished and a lift has been installed to assist the disabled and also wheelchair users. During the summer of 2009 the main lounge area has been refurbished as has the "Lewis Room" which is a dual purpose facility for meetings or dining, and the small committee room. Elsewhere on the website there are photographs of the interior of the Hall and more information about meeting at Garston and the facilities.

Further general information on Freemasonry in Garston can be obtained from the Group Vice Chairman on 01744 894873 and details of the cost and availability of meeting rooms at the Hall are available from the Hall Chairman on 0151 427 6683.